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# Letter dated 28 March 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter addressed to you from Seyoum Mesfin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, regarding the current situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council and have it circulated as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Negash Kebret **Botora**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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## Annex to the letter dated 28 March 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Allow me at the outset to express our deep understanding of the difficulties you have been facing in helping Ethiopia and Eritrea make progress in resolving our dispute. In particular, Ethiopia is grateful for your actions during this recent fabricated crisis in upholding legality.

I think it is important to communicate our views at a time when you are finalizing your report to the Security Council on the future of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE). This is especially relevant in view of such an obvious public relations exercise as the latest letter of the President of Eritrea (S/2008/200, annex). The future of UNMEE or of United Nations peacekeeping efforts on the Ethiopia-Eritrea border is not a game. The issue is a serious one. That letter can be seen only as part of a public relations exercise on behalf of parties apparently still prepared to give Eritrea an excuse despite a plethora of recent evidence to the contrary. I am confident that the Security Council will not be hoodwinked by this facile attempt to try to improve Eritrea's image and divert attention from its recent behaviour.

The opening of the letter, with President Afwerki's categorical statement that "The Algiers Agreement and its fundamental tenets cannot be diluted, nullified or forgotten", is at total variance with the rest of the letter's contents and, indeed, with Eritrea's actions over the past months and years. It beats no relationship to the tone and content of previous letters from the Government of Eritrea to you and to the Security Council, in which the reality of Eritrea's position has been made quite clear. These certainly give no indication of any Eritrean interest in peace or of support for any possible solutions to the current impasse. Eritrea has steadily undermined and unravelled the core elements of the Algiers Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. This is absolutely central to the entire peace process. It is totally absurd for Eritrea to claim that it fully accepts this when the core elements of the process actually insist on the integrity of the demilitarized temporary security zone and a fully operational UNMEE, both of which Eritrea has consistently undermined from the outset.

I am confident that the ideas and suggestions that you will make to the Security Council about the relocation of UNMEE will not affect the validity of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities in its entirety. We are also sure that consideration of your options will be informed by Security Council resolution 1798 (2008), which makes clear the Council's view that the integrity of the temporary security zone should be fully restored, with full freedom of operation for UNMEE.

Eritrea's record in the Horn of Africa for more than a decade has been one of aggression. All of its recent actions underline this. Ethiopia is not in occupation of any Eritrean territory. Nor can the issue of occupation arise before demarcation is finalized. As you know, an international tribunal, the neutral Ethiopia-Eritrea Claims Commission, ruled without dissent that Eritrea committed aggression against Ethiopia when it invaded Ethiopia in May 1998 and launched an entirely unprovoked war. This was, in fact, the climax to several years of Eritrean aggression in the region against almost all its neighbours. In every case, the aggression was entirely unprovoked.

Eritrea has not confined its actions to those cases. It was clearly reported by the Security Council Monitoring Group on Somalia in 2006 that Eritrea had embarked on a policy of attempting to destabilize Ethiopia, arming and training a number of terrorist organizations in the region and infiltrating a number of armed bands across our borders. It has taken Ethiopian nationals and tourists hostages. In fact, two Ethiopian nationals are still being held in Eritrea. It has supported extremist forces in Somalia, including Al-Shabaab, which has now been formally declared a terrorist organization by the United States of America. It is now widely recognized that Eritrea has been acting as a leading organizer of armed extremist groups in the Horn of Africa.

As you are aware, Eritrea has constantly increased tension along the border between our two countries as it expanded its takeover of the temporary security zone. It steadily increased restrictions on the operations of UNMEE to the point where the Mission's effectiveness was destroyed. Those moves were taken in deliberate defiance of the United Nations and its Security Council and of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, to which Eritrea purports to be committed. This clearly gives the lie to any claim by Eritrea that it believes that the Algiers Agreement "cannot be diluted, nullified or forgotten". Eritrea has, in fact, been working unremittingly to nullify the Algiers Agreement.

Under no circumstances can the violation of a bilateral treaty, the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, or the integrity of UNMEE and the safety of its personnel, be considered "minor" or "tangential". UNMEE is central to the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities and to the legal framework of the peace process laid out in the Algiers Agreements. It is not possible to pick and choose from the clauses of the Algiers Agreements. Both Ethiopia and Eritrea signed those agreements and committed themselves to the complete peace process. We have remained committed to that process in its entirety. We regret that, on the contrary, Eritrea has intensified its intransigence over the peace process and its rejection of the normalization of relations.

Eritrea has demonstrated time and again its deliberate intent to humiliate UNMEE, an official United Nations peacekeeping mission. It has repeatedly snubbed the demands and resolutions of the Security Council. None of this is in dispute. Nor is the fact that Eritrea's contemptuous and disdainful dismissal of the United Nations poses a major threat to the future of United Nations peacekeeping. Equally, its deliberate decision to spurn the Algiers Agreements, despite publicity gimmicks to the contrary, poses a major threat to peace in our region. In these circumstances, I would reiterate that Ethiopia believes it is most necessary for the Security Council to impose punitive sanctions on Eritrea to ensure that it fulfils the international obligations to which it committed itself in 2000.

(*Signed*) Seyoum **Mesfin**
Foreign Minister